

# **KENTUCKY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

## **STAFF NOTE**

### **Review Item:**

Revisions to Kentucky's Accountability System

### **Applicable Statute or Regulation:**

KRS 158.6453, 703 KAR 5:020

### **History/Background:**

***Existing Policy.*** In 2004, the Kentucky Board of Education (KBE) began to engage in deliberate conversations around moving the state assessment program forward in anticipation that assessment contracts would soon expire. A structure for guiding the conversation was the document titled "Seven Steps Forward in Assessment" that outlined a number of enhancements and future goals for the state assessment system. As the KBE listened to the field and policymakers and considered legal requirements in Kentucky statute and No Child Left Behind, new directions for the system emerged. The outcome of these multiple-year conversations and subsequent board decisions has been new assessment contracts that will continue the state assessment program in a redesigned format.

Additionally, Senate Bill 130 added the ACT for students at grade 11 and optional WorkKeys assessments to the EXPLORE and PLAN readiness assessments included in the CATS assessment Request for Proposal (RFP). The bill also included requirements on accommodations, reporting, student interventions, cost, alignment studies and subsequent reduction of items on the Kentucky Core Content Test (KCCT), and technical advice. The new assessment contracts now serve as the vehicles to implement the decisions of the Kentucky Board of Education and actions of the 2006 Kentucky General Assembly that have enhanced the assessment program with several new components.

Since the inception of a state assessment and accountability program with the passage of the Kentucky Education Reform Act (KERA), the accountability focus has remained primarily school-based with recognition and sanctions attached to school results. The KBE adopted a growth model with performance of schools serving as their own baseline. All students and thus all schools are expected to demonstrate improvement within the system.

The overriding goal of the Commonwealth Accountability Testing System (CATS) is for all schools in Kentucky to reach Proficiency as defined by the KBE. The accountability system provides the mechanism for measuring this goal and thus provides feedback to schools on how they are progressing. Proficiency for a school is represented as an

accountability index of 100 by 2014. The Kentucky Accountability Index includes both academic and nonacademic measures. These multiple measures provide a “snapshot” of schools and communicate the importance of each measure in terms of resources and instructional programs.

Now that the new assessment components and timelines for their implementation are mostly in place, the important task becomes determining how the assessment components will be reflected in the accountability system. Adding components to the assessment system provides not only the opportunity to improve the measurement of school and student performance, but the ability to determine how assessment components become part of the calculation of the accountability index.

### **Policy Issue(s):**

In August as a starting point in the decision process, the KBE reviewed several possible options for the accountability system under each of the three major areas. The options shared in August are summarized below.

#### **Academic Index:**

1. Maintain the focus on all content areas.
2. Simplify weights.
3. Include a measure of growth using grade-to-grade assessments in reading and mathematics in grades 3—8 when longitudinal data is cumulated.
4. Increase the weight of reading and mathematics.
5. Utilize ACT items augmented with KCCT items to calculate scores for reading, mathematics, science and on-demand writing at the high school.

#### **Norm-Referenced Test (NRT) Index:**

1. Do not include a NRT Index at elementary and middle, but redistribute the five percent (5%) weight to other content areas.
2. Use a 6<sup>th</sup> grade NRT (CTBS) linked back to the elementary school.
3. At middle school, include the 6<sup>th</sup> grade NRT or the 8<sup>th</sup> grade EXPLORE or a combination of both.
4. At middle school, administer a CTBS in 6<sup>th</sup>, but do not include in accountability or do not administer CTBS in 6<sup>th</sup>.
5. At high school, include a national measure based on 10<sup>th</sup> grade PLAN, 11th grade ACT, or a combination of both.

#### **Nonacademic Index:**

1. Change the total weight of the Nonacademic Index.
2. Change the distribution of weights with the Nonacademic Index.
3. Set benchmarks for individual student attendance.
4. Change the measure for Retention to capture the number of years students spend in a grade span (i.e., elementary program).
5. Change the measure of successful Transition to Adult Life to include:
  - a. ACT Postsecondary Placement Policy Benchmarks, and
  - b. WorkKeys Employability Certificate
6. Use Graduation Rate to capture both Dropout and Retention values.

On September 6, the Kentucky Board of Education will continue its consideration of how academic and nonacademic factors should be reflected in the accountability system. The discussion remains organized around the three major areas that combine to create the composite Accountability Index: 1) Academic Index, 2) Nonacademic Index, and 3) the Norm-Referenced Test Index.

Staff has further refined the options introduced in August into key questions regarding the structure of the accountability system. The use of key questions regarding CATS issues is an attempt to simplify for discussion purposes a complex system. KDE looks to the KBE for guidance as each question is considered and as other related issues emerge in the conversation.

As a starting point for discussion, a PowerPoint presentation for the KBE September meeting has been developed. (See Attachment A.) The presentation begins with a quick review of the three major areas and moves to discussion of each key question. The questions are organized under the three major areas: 1) Academic Index, 2) Nonacademic Index, and 3) the Norm-Referenced Test Index.

For each question, the grade spans impacted are noted and an identification label of either *weight* or a *measure* is applied. A weight question targets the percentage at which a component should be included in the accountability formula. A measure question focuses on the method for collecting data to use in calculating the accountability component. Also, provided when appropriate and available for each question are legal parameters, staff recommendations and rationale, and calculation information.

Key questions include:

1. Should the weight of reading and mathematics be increased?
  - a. Should accountability calculations include a measure of growth using grade-to-grade assessments in reading and mathematics (3—8) when longitudinal data is cumulated?
2. Should the focus on all content areas be maintained?
  - a. Should items from the ACT be utilized and augmented with items from the Kentucky Core Content Test to calculate indices for reading, mathematics, science and on-demand writing?
3. Should a Norm-Referenced Index be included at elementary and middle school?
4. Should a national comparison measure using norms be included?
  - a. Should national comparisons of PLAN and ACT composite scores be included?
5. Should the total weight of the Nonacademic Index and the distribution of weights within the index be changed?
  - a. How should attendance be measured?
  - b. Should retention at elementary and middle school and dropout at middle school be captured in a rate that reflects the number of years students use to complete each school level?
  - c. Beginning in 2007-08, should Graduation Rate be used to capture both Dropout and Retention?

- d. Should ACT, WorkKeys, and Advanced Placement exams be included as measures of successful Transition to Adult Life?

In a separate handout (Attachment B), staff has presented three pie charts with current accountability weights (1998-2006) for elementary, middle and high schools and proposed weights for 2007-Beyond. Proposed weights are shared for KBE reaction and to make visible the impact on the accountability system of the more detailed information accompanying the key questions.

The questions have introduced several ideas that will require time for full implementation to occur. KDE will need to evaluate data collection methods and their impact, seek the advice of the technical and psychometric communities, and request approval of the United States Department of Education if NCLB reporting and compliance are impacted.

Since the state assessment and accountability system provides the means to report results on both state and federal performance targets and the consequences for not achieving goals, issues around effectively managing changes to the system become critical. As 2014 is now a mere eight years away, it is vital that during the process of system change, fairness, continuity, and stability are maintained as much as possible and that schools and districts are provided the direction and time necessary to adjust and modify their programs appropriately.

The staff note and attached PowerPoint presentation are for KBE consideration and reactions at the September meeting and staff will continue to consult with advisory and stakeholder groups. Our plan is to continue the discussion of these important decisions at the KBE September meeting, conduct further work during the fall and bring formal recommendations for revisions to the accountability system in the form of revised regulations at the October meeting (first reading).

To provide further assessment background and information, two additional attachments are included: 1) a glossary of assessment terms produced by the Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards and Student Testing (CRESST), which is affiliated with the Graduate School of Education and Information Studies at UCLA (Attachment C) and 2) information on validity and reliability (Attachment D).

### **Impact on Getting to Proficiency:**

As Kentucky's assessment and accountability system transitions to incorporate new assessments and changes to the accountability program, an important consideration will be how to build the system while allowing schools and districts the capacity to manage the change. Clear expectations are a key to focusing work toward school and student proficiency and reasonable timelines will enable schools and districts to implement change effectively.

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**Commissioner of Education**

**Date:**

September 2006